

NATIONAL SECTION OFFICE
2112 BROADWAY
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10023



AP153 file Argentine

July 22, 1978

Dear Friend,

When the present military government took power in Argentina in the coup of March 1976, the junta promised to restore a respect for human rights. Left-wing terrorist activity has been almost completely suppressed, but the promise to restore human rights is a mockery. 15,000 persons have disappeared without a trace after being arrested by the police security forces or parapolice.

Amnesty International has well-documented evidence of the existence of secret camps where prisoners are tortured and unlawfully executed. Among the missing are women and children. One of them, Susana Lugones, was the 40th journalist in the country to disappear. 29 of her colleagues has been killed, 70 imprisoned and 400 have gone into exile.

Only a concerted effort by all of us expressing our deep concern about these gross violations of human rights may put a halt to this widespread suffering. We urge you to write to:

Exmo. General Jorge Rafael Videla
Presidente de la Republica Argentina
Casa Rosada
Buenos Aires, Argentina

General Albano Harguindeguy
Ministro del Interior
Ministerio del Interior
Casa de Gobierno
Balcarce 50
Buenos Aires,
Argentina

Sincerely yours,

Ginetta Sagan

Ginetta Sagan

Sally H. Lilienthal

Sally H. Lilienthal

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

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Amnesty International is a worldwide human rights movement which works impartially for the release of prisoners of conscience, men and women detained anywhere for their beliefs, color, ethnic origin, sex, religion or language, provided they have neither used nor advocated violence. Amnesty International opposes torture and the death penalty in all cases without reservation and advocates fair and prompt trials for all political prisoners. Amnesty International is independent of all governments, political factions, ideologies, economic interests and religious creeds. It has consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC), UNESCO and the Council of Europe, has cooperative relations with the Organization of African Unity (Bureau for the Placement and Education of African Refugees). Amnesty International was the recipient of the 1977 Nobel Prize for Peace.

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Date: May 1978

ARGENTINA:

ACTION PAPER FOR DISAPPEARED OR DETAINED WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Amnesty International would like to point out that women in Argentina are not repressed because they are women. However, they are more susceptible to physical abuse whilst in detention (rape, miscarriage under torture). Furthermore, the situation of abducted/detained women who give birth in prison is particularly alarming.

DISAPPEARANCES

"A single death by firing squad can provoke a world-wide scandal: with the thousands of disappeared people there is always the convenience of uncertainty..... there are no crimes to report or explanations to be given."

Eduardo Galeano, Index, March/April 1978

Since the military coup in Argentina of 24 March 1976, it is estimated that approximately 15,000 people have disappeared. Indeed, lawyers and human rights organizations within Argentina estimate that since the coup, between 20,000 and 30,000 habeas corpus writs have been filed at the Ministry of the Interior.

The Argentine authorities usually give three reasons for why these people have disappeared: the person has gone "underground"; the person has chosen to emigrate without telling relatives; the person has been killed in a clash with the security forces. However, there is much evidence to prove that persons who have disappeared were, in fact, illicitly arrested by official law-enforcing bodies.

Many families fear reprisals against themselves or the abducted person if they publicize the disappearance. There is very little that they can do in Argentina except file a writ of habeas corpus with the Ministry of the Interior. Recently, however, the families of disappeared persons have become very active and have been appealing to international organizations like Amnesty International for help. They have formed themselves into a committee called Comité de Familiares de Desaparecidos y Detenidos por Razones Políticas (the Committee of Relatives of People Disappeared or Detained for Political Reasons), but are known as "The Mad Women of the Plaza de Mayo", because every Thursday they demonstrate in the Plaza de Mayo outside the government buildings in order to pressurize the authorities into launching an inquiry into the whereabouts of missing persons. In May 1978, a group of 13 women who had been searching for more than a year for their missing children and grandchildren formed themselves into a group called "The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo": most of their daughters were pregnant when they disappeared.

It is worth noting that on 13 April 1978, the Buenos Aires newspaper La Nación published a list of 232 persons who had all been located by the "Search Division for Disappeared Persons" (La Division Busqueda de Personas Desaparecidas) - an office apparently set up under the auspices of the Criminal Investigation Department of the Federal Police. This admission on the part of the Argentine authorities would appear to be the fruits of over two years of international pressure.

The following are a few representative disappearance cases:

1. French Nuns Alicia Domón and Léonie Duquet + approximately 13 relatives of disappeared persons.

On Thursday 18 December 1977, a group of approximately 14 persons, relatives from the Comité de Familiares de Desaparecidos y Detenidos por Razones Políticas (see previous page) were all abducted by persons dressed in civilian clothing. They were all driven away in five Renault 12 cars; to date, there has been no official news of their whereabouts.

The relatives (almost all women) were leaving the Church of the Holy Cross in Buenos Aires where they had had a meeting to discuss placing an advertisement about disappearances in a Buenos Aires newspaper. In this group were a Paraguayan medical doctor, Dra Esther Ballestrino de Careaga who lived in Buenos Aires under the protection of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, and a French nun, Alicia Domón. Alicia Domón assisted the Argentine Bishop of Quilmes in an ecumenical movement which tries to locate missing persons.

Another French nun, Léonie Duquet, was abducted from her home on 10 December 1977 by four unidentified men driving an unmarked car. She was not, apparently, engaged in the search for disappeared persons, but was an assistant to the Bishop of San Justo.

On 30 March 1978, the French newspaper Le Monde reported that the two French nuns had been killed and their bodies discovered two months previously on a beach between Bahía Blanca and Mar del Plata. The body of Dra Esther Ballestrino de Careaga was said to have been found in the River Plate at the same time. However, there has never been any official news of their whereabouts, despite personal inquiries from President Giscard d'Estaing, a letter from the French Ambassador to Argentina, M. François de la Garde, reminding the Argentine government of its duty under the Vienna Convention to inform foreign embassies of the detention of foreign citizens, and the French Bishop of Annecy (who is also the President of the French Episcopal Committee on Relations with Latin America) flying out to Argentina to make inquiries.

The disappearance of this entire group of persons is thought to have been an attempt on the part of the Argentine authorities to prevent people demonstrating outside the government buildings.

2. Graciela RUTILO ARTES and her daughter Carla

Official connivance between the Argentine and Uruguayan security forces is well known. However, according to the French publication Cimade (February 1978), the Argentine Ambassador to Paris admitted, on 6 February 1978, that the same (un)official agreement exists between the Argentine authorities and the Bolivian government. According to the Cimade source, four Argentinians have been arrested in Bolivia by the Bolivian security forces over the last year. All four were handed over to the Argentine authorities and all four have disappeared without trace.

On 2 April 1976, the Bolivian police arrested 24 year old Graciela Rutilo Artes, an Argentine national and her daughter Carla, then aged 9 months (and a Peruvian national) in Oruro, Bolivia. They were both transferred to La Paz, where mother and daughter were separated; Graciela was kept in the Bolivian Ministry of the Interior, where it is alleged that she was tortured, and her daughter Carla was sent to an orphanage in La Paz where she was registered under a false name.

It is reported that on 26 August 1976, Carla was removed from the orphanage and that on 29 August, both mother and daughter were handed over to the Argentine authorities at the frontier. There had been no formal extradition order.

Although Graciela is of Argentine nationality, she had been living in Bolivia since the age of 9. Relatives state that she had no known political affiliation; the motive of her arrest would appear to be her participation, as a representative of a students' organization, in a tin miners' strike. To date, there has been no news of the whereabouts of either.

Amnesty International has received many testimonies concerning women who were pregnant at the time of abduction. The following are two representative cases: no official information has ever been received as to the fate of these women or their children.

1. Silvia Mónica QUINTELA DALASTA (Her photograph is available from AI)

Silvia Mónica Quintela Dalasta, a medical doctor aged 30, was detained in Buenos Aires on 17 January 1977 by five armed men who belonged to the Navy. At this time, she was three months' pregnant. She was taken away in a light blue Ford Falcon. Her husband, who now lives in exile in Europe, was an eye-witness to her abduction.

Her relatives took all possible legal measures, but there has never been an official recognition of her detention. Nevertheless, a released prisoner has informed AI that Silvia was detained for at least four months in the Navy Mechanics' School (La Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada) in the capital; this has frequently cited in testimonies as an unofficial detention centre. Furthermore, the released prisoner also stated that Silvia gave birth to a baby in the Navy Mechanics' School in July 1977. However, the baby was never handed over to relatives and there has been no news of either since this date.

2. Silvia Angélica Corazza de Sánchez

Silvia Angélica Corazza de Sánchez was abducted on 13 May 1977 in a bar called El Nuevo Clave in the town of Lanus, Buenos Aires province, by persons dressed in civilian clothing. At the time of her abduction, she was two months' pregnant.

In December 1977, Silvia's parents received a letter in her handwriting announcing that she was expecting to give birth to her baby around Christmas. On 3 January 1978, three men in plain clothes arrived at her parents' house, bringing with them Silvia herself and the baby daughter, who had been born on 29 December 1977. The men forced Silvia's mother to sign a document which, among other points which she cannot remember, stated that she would not hand over the baby to anybody else. The men then left the baby, called María de las Mercedes, with her grandparents. They took Silvia away with them again, and nothing has been heard of her since.

Since receiving the baby, Silvia's parents have attempted to obtain a birth certificate and identity document for her from the authorities. The Ministry of the Interior promised Silvia's father that the baby would be given a birth certificate.

Silvia's husband, 37 year old surgeon Alberto Sánchez, now lives in Europe. He believes that the Argentine Ministry of the Interior's promise to give his daughter a birth certificate indicates that the government is in a position to locate his wife.

There are still several children missing. The majority of these were abducted along with their mothers:

1. Case of Floreal Avellaneda

On 15 April 1976, uniformed and plainclothed men machine-gunned the door of the Avellaneda family's home at 2.00 am. The men were looking for Señor Floreal Avellaneda, a former trade union leader in the TENSA factory. Not finding him, they ransacked the house, stole money and other belongings, brutally beat his wife Iris de Avellaneda and his son, also called Floreal, aged 15.

Later the mother and son were taken to the police station of Villa Martelli and tortured. Señora Avellaneda was tied to a bed where, after being soaked with ice-cold water for half an hour, her trousers were pulled off and she was given electric shock treatment all over her body. Her son underwent similar treatment and she could hear him screaming. They were briefly reunited, then Señora Avellaneda was taken hooded to a place she believed to be the Brigada Gúemes, a police barracks.

Here she was repeatedly questioned about her husband's whereabouts. She was given electric shock treatment and beaten with sticks and gun butts on her head, neck and face. She was carried out to open country where a simulated execution was staged. The torture continued for some days, then the treatment improved and finally she was transferred to Olmos prison and officially detained, 15 days after her arrest.

Writs of habeas corpus were filed for her son without any result. On 16 August 1976, the newspapers reported that several corpses had been found on the Uruguayan shores of the River Plate. A tattoo (a heart with the letters "F.A.") on one of the bodies fitted the description of 15 year old Floreal Avellaneda.

The Ministry of Defence acknowledged that Señora Avellaneda was detained at the disposal of the Executive Power, but for reasons of security could not give any information about the personnel responsible for the arrest of her and her son.

2. Simón Antonio RIQUELO (His photograph is available from AI)

Simón Antonio Riquelo was 20 days old at the time of his abduction. He is the son of Sara Rita Méndez Lamporio, a Uruguayan refugee living in Buenos Aires until she was abducted on 13 July 1976 along with Simón. In October 1976 she turned up in official detention in Montevideo, Uruguay. According to the Uruguayan armed forces she was arrested in Uruguay on 27 October 1976. However, nothing at all has been heard of Simón Antonio since his abduction.

TORTURE

Amnesty International continues to receive torture testimonies from released prisoners. It is a problem which is closely linked to disappearances, since torture is most likely to occur when the victim is secretly detained in military barracks, local police stations and disused buildings. Torture is, however, also common in official prisons.

The most usual methods of torture are: electric shock treatment; water torture; beatings with fists, truncheons, rifle butts and sticks (there have been cases of pregnant women so badly beaten that they have miscarried); cigarette burns; hooding; deprivation of food, drink and sleep; sexual abuse such as rape; Amnesty International has also received allegations of torture by removing teeth, fingernails and eyes, by burning with boiling water, oil and acid and even by castration.

1. Veronica Handl-Alvarez (Her photo is available from AI)

Veronica Handl-Alvarez, aged 24, of dual Argentine-Austrian nationality and pregnant, disappeared in Buenos Aires on 5 September 1976. At the time of her arrest she was studying at the Faculty of Arts, University of Buenos Aires and financing her studies by working part-time at the Mexican Embassy. Despite her family's efforts to trace her, there was no news of her whereabouts until nearly two months later. They were informed that she was being held in Villa Devoto prison.

During the course of Veronica's first two months in prison, she was interrogated and subjected to the following forms of torture - carried out exclusively by men:

- a) Blows with the fists, kicking, blows with an iron rod: all over the body, especially on the head, chest and abdomen.
- b) A door was slammed on her head, and thereafter, unconscious, she was thrown into her cell.
- c) Electrical torture: tied naked to a metal chair with electrical wires on her fingers and toes. Later placed on a wooden bed and subjected to electrical torture all over her body, especially on the genitalia. On this occasion she was also beaten with an iron rod on the abdomen: this caused vaginal bleeding. During the electrical torture, a doctor was present. He did auscultation of her heart several times, and established that it was alright to continue the torture. The torture by electricity left burns and long-lasting numbness of the hands, especially the right (several months), less of the feet (about three weeks). Moreover, swelling and numbness of the mouth caused by dysphagia lasting for about one week. Finally, it should be mentioned that she was shaking - especially her hands and jaws - for days after electrical torture.
- d) Cold water was poured over her, especially after electrical torture. Occasionally she would suddenly - for example, in the middle of the night - be ordered to have a cold shower.
- e) She was blindfolded with adhesive plaster and in total isolation for two months in a very small and very cold single cell without a toilet; she had to relieve herself in the cell.
- f) She was deprived of sleep: she was roused every hour for several nights and ordered to have a cold shower, with or without her clothes on.
- g) Sexual torture: sham intercourse, including masturbation by male warders.
- h) Sham executions, inter alia, with a rope. At one time a "priest" was called, but he immediately started kicking her. This was repeated for several days running.

On 11 April 1977, she gave birth to a son in prison. During labour, which lasted for about five hours, she was tied to a bed by her hands and feet and was completely unattended until the last few minutes. Her newborn baby had to sleep on the floor of a rat-infested cell.

Veronica was unexpectedly released in October 1977, after the Austrian government had granted her a visa. In November 1977, she was examined by AI's group of Danish doctors. They found the following sequelae to torture: impaired memory, difficulty in concentrating, nervousness, headaches, dizziness and vaginal discharge since delivery of the baby. Fortunately, her baby (then aged 7 months) showed normal mental and motor development upon physical examination.

2. Isabel Gamba de NEGROTTI

Isabel Gamba de Negrotti, a 27 year old nursery school teacher, was abducted from her home, together with her husband and taken to a police station in Villa Urquiza, Buenos Aires. Although she told the police that she was pregnant, she was punched and beaten, her hair was pulled and she was threatened with death. She was kept hooded and her coat was taken away. She was threatened and beaten by about eight men, who said they would go and get her younger sister and mother. Later that evening, she had cramp spasms and began to feel ill. She could hear her husband screaming.

The next morning, she was taken to Coordinación Federal so that her political activities could be investigated. The worst treatment began:

"They took me to another room where they kicked me and punched me in the head. Then they undressed me and beat me on the legs, buttocks and shoulders with something made of rubber. This lasted a long time: I fell down several times and they made me get up and stand by supporting myself on a table. They carried on beating me. While all this was going on they talked to me, insulted me and asked me about people I didn't know and things I didn't understand. I pleaded with them to leave me alone, or else I would lose my baby. I hadn't the strength to speak, the pain was so bad.

"They started to give me electric shocks on my breasts, the side of my body and under my arms. They kept questioning me. They gave me electric shocks in the vagina and put a pillow over my mouth to stop me screaming. Some-one they called the "colonel" came and said they were going to increase the voltage until I talked. They kept throwing water over my body and applying electric shocks all over."

Two days later she miscarried. Her husband was subsequently released and currently lives in exile in Europe. She is still detained in Villa Devoto prison.

A STUDY OF VILLA DEVOTO PRISON

Unidad 2, Cárcel de Villa Devoto, Bermúdez 2651,
Buenos Aires, Capital Federal, Argentina

Villa Devoto in Buenos Aires is Argentina's largest prison. It contains the majority of Argentina's female political prisoners (approximately 1,200 according to the testimonies of released prisoners) although some 70 male political prisoners and a large number of male common prisoners are also detained here. It was built to house 2,500 prisoners, but currently holds some 4,000. It was these overcrowded conditions which led male common prisoners to protest and caused the "riot" of 14 March 1978 - an incident which received considerable publicity in the international press. Between 40 and 46 prisoners died and between 70 and 76 were severely injured. According to the official statement of the Argentine authorities, a group of prisoners - allegedly all on narcotics charges - took a prison guard hostage, killed him and then set fire to their mattresses and blankets; the fire quickly spread. The authorities were quick to point out that none of the dead or injured had bullet wounds. However, people outside the prison allege that the special para-military combat groups were sent to quell the riot, helicopters were called in and police cordoned off the prison. They further allege that the noise of gunfire inside the prison could be heard for about half an hour. One of the doctors - Dr Fortunato Benagui - who attended the injured was subsequently quoted in the weekly magazine Sur as saying that some of the dead

and injured had bullet wounds. Furthermore, the American-based Council on Hemispheric Affairs issued a statement saying that at least some of the victims were classified by international agencies as being political prisoners.

For the past two years, prison conditions in Argentina have been of major concern to Amnesty International. The following is a précis of various testimonies - from the inmates of Villa Devoto themselves and from released prisoners. The passages in quotation marks are reproduced verbatim from these testimonies. Although we have inserted relevant quotations from the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and Related Recommendations (SMRTPRR), since December 1975, all prisons in Argentina have been under military jurisdiction. Political prisoners are all categorized under decree 2023 (issued in December 1974 and made more severe in May 1976) as extremely dangerous and are subject to a harsh régime which:

- a) restricts visits and correspondence to blood relatives (this does not include common-law spouses or partners of a second marriage, as divorce is not recognized in Argentina;)
- b) imposes strict censorship of mail and reading matter;
- c) authorizes spot checks and whole body searches which may be carried out at random, even at meal times;
- d) permits severe penalties for the smallest infraction of prison regulations.

Furthermore, decree 955 (Regimen de Máxima Peligrosidad) -the maximum security regulations also apply in Villa Devoto. According to the inmates of Villa Devoto, these decrees (2023 and 955) "were created with the aim of treating political prisoners in an inhuman and cruel way and 'legalizing' the violations of the most elementary human rights".

Finally, it is worth noting that Villa Devoto, along with La Plata prison (for males, situated in Buenos Aires province) is considered Argentina's "model" prison. The age range of the female political prisoners is from 17 to 50 years years old and babies are imprisoned along with their mothers.

General Conditions

"The wards (pabellones - large rooms with about 20 bunks) where the many political prisoners held in this prison must spend their days are long dark corridors with cells on each side. Each ward has 23 cells, and in each of them are four people who have to live in a space that would be the minimum for only one person. All have as sole furniture a water-closet, a wash basin, a cement shelf and four bunks fixed to the walls. There is a window, which, besides its iron bars is covered with a thin steel net. It is forbidden to climb up or get near the window. Ventilation is minimal and the sanitary system virtually non-existent.

Food

SMRTPRR (20 (1) and (2): "Every prisoner shall be provided by the administration at the usual hours with food of nutritional value adequate for health and strength, of wholesome quality and well prepared and served."

"Drinking water shall be available to every prisoner whenever s/he needs it."

"It (the food) is completely inadequate, based on flour and fat. The

spaghetti and stew, the daily meals, are an indescribable mass which is almost impossible to swallow. There is almost never meat and when it is given, it is of the worst quality, thus having no protein value at all. Several months ago, the delivery of milk ceased. All this leads to steady physical deterioration and the loss of basic resistance to disease.

"Every day, prisoners fall ill with serious stomach complaints or other illnesses which require a special diet, of better quality. Usually this is not ordered, and if it is ordered it may be interrupted at any time. The tea (boiled mate, a herb tea) has no taste at all, and is without sugar and is no better than the rest of the food. There is grease floating in it from the badly cleaned containers. This diet could be reasonably balanced if relatives might be allowed to send food to the prisoners, or if better food were sold at the prison. Both alternatives are expressly forbidden by decree 955. At the present time, only a few items allowed by the decree can be brought into the prison and even these are difficult to obtain, owing to the bad economic position of the prisoners."

Medical Attention

SMRTERR (22 (1) and (2) and 25(1)): "At every institution, there shall be available the services of at least one qualified medical officer who should have some knowledge of psychiatry...."

"Sick prisoners who require specialist treatment shall be transferred to specialized institutions or to civil hospitals....."

"The medical officer shall have the care of the physical and mental health of the prisoners and should daily see all sick prisoners, all who complain of illness, and any prisoner to whom his attention is specially directed."

"This is exceedingly bad. When they go to see the doctor, some medicine may be prescribed without any examination. These medicines must be bought at the prison, and the prisoners do not always have the means to do so. Nothing, not even an aspirin, is provided, even in cases of extreme urgency. In order to obtain assistance from a specialist, it is necessary to book months in advance and, if you are lucky, the day may come. But the result makes little difference owing to the situation already described. In some cases X-rays are ordered, but the results are not known by the prisoners. The doctor's surgery has only a bed, and no other medical equipment, not even basic first aid equipment. While the consultation takes place the prison warders and other staff walk past. The nurses treat the political prisoners badly and, like the doctors, they are more police than health staff. Most of them are unqualified, and previously belonged to the Inspection Board (Internal Security Police) and the prisoners are really guinea pigs for them. Usually they lack professional knowledge."

Case 1: Alicia PAÍS de JUÁREZ

In October 1977, political prisoner Alicia País de Juárez died in Pavilion 41 of Villa Devoto prison as a result of lack of medical attention. During her year of imprisonment, Alicia had had frequent attacks of asthma. When fellow prisoners asked for an investigation into her death, they were locked up in punishment cells for 20 days.

Case 2: Mireya ROJO

Legal adviser to the Metalworkers' Union of Villa Constitución (Unión de los Obreros Metalúrgicos), she was arrested on 29 April 1975 after a widespread strike in the industrial town of Villa Constitución, but has never been brought to trial. Whilst in detention, she contracted tuberculosis and is currently reported to weigh only 37 kilos. In July 1977, a testimony received from the prisoners of prisoners of Villa Devoto reported that she had also got a stomach ulcer. Although she has been transferred to Villa Devoto hospital, her health gives cause for grave concern given the inadequate medical attention.

Other women seriously ill in Villa Devoto prison (reported to AI in July 1977: current state of health unknown):

1. Matilde PERALTA PINO - aged 42, a polio victim
2. Carolina SUAZO de SAVALA
3. Beatriz JACOB - hernia of the diaphragm
4. Margarita FERRE - hemorrhage as a result of torture
5. Eva DIAZ de ROMERO - aged 60; acute diabetes
6. Yolanda GATICA - psychologically disturbed.
7. Margarita BARRERA - Chagas' fever (otherwise known as African sleeping sickness) fever resulting in tremors, headaches, apathy, convulsions and a coma progressing to death.
8. Marta RAMOS - suffers from acute asthma attacks
9. Eva Magdalena ZAMORA de PHIENS
10. Norma E. PERALTA - constriction of aorta
11. Carmen CORMES de CASTIGLIONI - aged 66; lumbago and serious heart condition.
12. Blanca BECHER - aged 31
13. Rosa SANDOVAL - aged 53; serious physical deterioration.
14. Nancy AYALA - aged 19; megacolon: abnormal enlargement of colon resulting in malfunctioning of bowels.

Mothers and Babies

SMRTPRR (23 (1) and (2)): "In women's institutions there shall be special accommodation for all necessary pre-natal and post-natal care and treatment. Arrangements shall be made wherever practicable for children to be born in a hospital outside the institution. If a child is born in prison, this fact shall not be mentioned in the birth certificate."

"Where nursing infants are allowed to remain in the institution with their mothers, provision shall be made for a nursery staffed by qualified persons, where the infants shall be placed when they are not in the care of their mothers."

"The prisoners who are pregnant or have children younger than 6 months at the time of their arrest are kept in a separate ward, but without special treatment. What is more terrible is that, once the child is 6 months' old, decree 955 says that he must abandon his mother and be given to relatives. It is not even allowed for the child to be with his mother during his first year, which is a vital time for the child's future development."

See also case of Veronica Handl-Alvarez, Page 5.

Discipline and Punishment/Visits/Recreation/Inspection

Conduct constituting a disciplinary offence, the type and duration of that punishment and the authority competent to impose such punishments are all at the discretion of the Argentine authorities. However,

"Corporal punishment, punishment by placing in a dark cell, and all cruel, inhuman or degrading punishments shall be completely prohibited as punishments for disciplinary offences."

SMRTPRR, 31

According to testimonies received from the prisoners of Villa Devoto, the inmates are constantly punished for "the most improbable and arbitrary reasons that can be imagined". For example, it is apparently forbidden to: talk loudly, sing, celebrate birthdays, have a meeting of more than six people, put on plays, do physical exercises, do any work with the hands or show any sign of joy.

Prisoners are often punished by being sent to what are known as the "pig-sties". These are small cells, measuring 2.30m x 1m. The cell window is small and high up; when the natural light fades the cell is in total darkness. There is no wash-basin or toilet. A mattress and blankets are delivered at 10.00 pm and are taken away again at 6.00 am. The prisoner is only allowed to have the clothes she is wearing at the time. The period of punishment is, apparently, NEVER LESS THAN 20 days. Some prisoners are known to have spent 45 DAYS in total isolation in these cells.

Visits

The right to receive visitors may be withdrawn at any time as a punishment. Political prisoners in Villa Devoto may receive visitors for two hours a week: an hour for direct male relatives and an hour for direct female relatives. The visits take place in specially prepared rooms. The prisoner and her relatives are separated by a pane of glass which prevents all physical contact. Conversations are conducted through a microphone; furthermore, all conversations are recorded.

Recreation

Again, this privilege may also be withdrawn as a form of arbitrary punishment. The prisoners are allowed one hour's exercise per day in an enclosed concrete yard surrounded by armed guards. While the prisoners are taking their exercise, their cells are often searched by the guards. In the past, warders have stolen or broken a prisoner's few belongings.

Inspection

Decree 2023 and 955 legalize the "requisa vejatoria" - humiliating body searches:

"The inspection staff in Villa Devoto become day by day more specialized in ill treatment, aggression and harassment of the political prisoners. They have absolute impunity and the support of their superiors. Usually, the function of the inspection staff in a prison is to keep internal order and security: fundamentally a preventive function. At the present time, their work is fundamentally repressive and intimidatory.

"At the beginning, individual inspection was carried out by feeling the clothes of each prisoner. Then they were obliged to take their over-clothes

off, keeping only pants and bra. Now they have to be completely naked, allowing the woman in charge of the inspection to handle their bodies in a degrading and humiliating way. In some cases, certain prisoners were forced to go to the prison infirmary, so that the gynaecologist could give them a vaginal inspection.

In July 1977, Amnesty International received the following testimony from the prisoners of Villa Devoto, concerning interrogation and threats of execution:

Interrogation:

"In recent months the prisoners have been daily interrogated in prison by members of the First Army Corps from Buenos Aires, and the Second Army Corps from Rosario. Even so, on 13 June (1977) three prisoners were taken away from the prison, presumably to be taken to Cordoba for interrogation by the Third Army Corps. (This section of the army have announced that people arrested within their jurisdiction are to be taken to Cordoba for their interrogation. Knowing the criminal mentality of the armed forces in Cordoba, we are very worried about them.)

"The day they were taken from their cells, they were told that they would attend proceedings leading to their release. From prison they were taken to the Military Airport of Moron, from where they should have taken a plane to Cordoba. Once there they realized that they had been deceived and that the purpose of their journey was to interrogate them. That day the journey had to be cancelled because of bad weather, and they were sent back to prison with the assurance that they would be transferred when the order arrived. This happened a week later.

"This time, in spite of the protests of the other prisoners, who fearing for their lives tried to postpone the transfer, the soldiers took them away by force, brutally dragging the women across the floor. Several other political prisoners were severely beaten, and physically assaulted, and then sent to the punishment cells to be held incommunicado for 20 days (without visits, letters, locked in all the time, with music blaring through the prison loud-speakers).

"The authorities of the Villa Devoto prison say that they received orders from the military to produce the people asked for alive or dead. They, as the people in charge of the prison, are only responsible for the lives of the prisoners transferred for interrogation until the moment they leave the prison Gates."

Threats of Execution

"Horacio Martín Galindez, Security Chief, supported by the Director of the Prison, Mr Ruiz, has during the last few days made serious warnings to the prisoners, threatening them if they do not co-operate and accept the repressive policy of the transfer for torture, he himself will take responsibility for executing the prisoners by shooting them. Also at any time, he would give the order to riddle the cells with bullets. It will not be surprising if we soon hear of shooting and murder at the Villa Devoto prison, which is the prison that The Argentinian military authorities exhibit, as a model of respect for human rights, while what it really is, is a model of repression, harassment and torture that destroys physically the women of Argentina and other Latin American countries who live day by day under a system of terror and oppression.

Case studies of two women political prisoners currently detained in Villa Devoto:

1. María José YOFRE

María José Yofre was arrested on 19 December 1975, whilst in her eighth month of pregnancy, together with her 2 year old son. It is reported that she spent the last month of her pregnancy in a small room in a barracks without light or ventilation, in a region of consistently high temperatures and humidity. Her baby daughter was with her for only 24 hours; her son was also then taken from the prison, and she herself was transferred to Villa Devoto in Buenos Aires.

María's parents now live in Cuba, having been forced to leave Argentina in order to escape the repression inflicted upon their family:

Miguel Hugo Vaca Narvaja: Their brother-in-law. Disappeared on 10 March 1976 in Córdoba. He was a lawyer active in the defence of political prisoners.

Miguel Hugo Vaca Narvaja : Their nephew, and also a lawyer like his father. He and two other detainees were killed during a transfer from Córdoba Penitentiary.
(son of the above)

Carlos Felipe Altamira Yofre : Their nephew; also a lawyer and a member of the administrative council of the Córdoba College of Lawyers. Abducted in Buenos Aires in May 1976, a few days after military and police personnel had set fire to his office in Córdoba.

Gabriela Yofre : Their daughter. Abducted in Buenos Aires in October 1976. Mother of a 3 year old.

Husband of Gabriela : Killed in May 1977.

María's two children are now cared for by their paternal grandparents. By October 1977, she had only seen her children twice because of the economic difficulties occasioned by visits to the prison. The visits last for half an hour and prisoner and visitor are separated by a glass screen and have to talk through microphones. The conversations are recorded.

María José Yofre has now been held for 2½ years without any charges against her. Her case was taken up by Amnesty International in April 1978.

2. Liliana Graciela VOGLER

Liliana Graciela Vogler, a university student aged 17, was arrested on 23 June 1975 at her home in Río Cuarto, Córdoba province. It is reported that she was tortured during the first two days of her detention by the Provincial Police. She was blindfolded and hooded to prevent the later recognition of her torturers, and beaten all over her body. Under torture, she was forced to sign a declaration, which had been drawn up by the police, stating that she and two friends (Juan Alberto Muzzolón and Francisco Bermúdez, who had been arrested a few hours before her) were involved in political activities and in possession of subversive literature. Five days after her arrest, before being taken to the Federal Court, she was threatened that she and her family would be killed if

she did not confirm the declaration in court. She was not allowed to talk with her relatives or lawyer until the proceedings were over. She ratified the declaration drawn up by the police, but at the end of the preliminary hearings she stated how she had been beaten in the first days of her arrest and that after signing the declaration she had been treated well.

From 10 - 15 July (1975) she was transferred to Buen Pastor (a prison for women) in Córdoba city, and in August to Córdoba Penitentiary. At the same time, the arrests of young students were continuing in Río Cuarto. One of them, Clotilde Yercovich, was raped by a policeman called Getón Gómez. She had his baby during 1976, whilst detained in Río Cuarto prison.

As a result of the above arrests, the Federal Judge of Río Cuarto ordered that Liliana should be transferred to that city for a new investigation to be carried out. The transfer took place on 7 September 1975. During the journey she was tortured - psychologically at first: they pretended that they were going to shoot her. Twice en route she was made to get down from the vehicle transporting them and undergo a mock execution. All this time she was blindfolded and handcuffed. She was also pulled by the hair and threatened.

When Liliana was taken before the Federal Judge, she asked for protection and guarantees, because she wished to tell the truth, and having received solemn promises from the Judge, she denounced in detail the tortures to which she had been subjected at the time of her arrest and during the previous day's journey. She stated that she could not identify those who had ill-treated her in the first instance, but could say who had done so during the Transfer from Córdoba to Río Cuarto because she had been given a single blindfold and this had slipped a little, enabling her to recognize them. One of them was Getón Gómez, who was renowned amongst the political prisoners, and although she could not give the names of the other two, she could identify them. She then told the Judge that under threats and in fear of again being submitted to torture she had confirmed as correct the declarations which had been dragged from her by the police, when she had appeared before him. However, the truth was that she had never taken part in any politics, she was not connected with subversion and she was innocent of the charges made against her.

However, when she went to sign the declaration she found that her exact words had not been recorded and, more importantly, the name of her torturer and the information she had given concerning the other two helpers were omitted. The secretary of the court informed her that he had not been present at certain points of the investigation and therefore he did not know what she had said, but she should not worry because if she wished to have it recorded she should request a supplementary investigation, as the Federal Judge had already retired and he himself could not add to his declaration anything that he had not heard personally. Apparently, this was correct, but a new investigation could never be obtained. In the face of Liliana's declarations, the judge in charge of the case (at that time Dr José M. Alinga) ordered that Liliana should meet each of the five of her friends and fellow students who were in detention. Two of them (previously mentioned), Francisco Bermúdez, son of a well-known Río Cuarto doctor, and Juan Alberto Muzzolon, had been removed from Río Cuarto prison and taken to the police station. They were tortured for five days: they were beaten with fists and sticks all over their bodies, but particularly on the head; they were kicked in the genitals and submitted to "water torture" - only urine was used instead of water. The third was Juan Carlos Gentile; he had purple, green and black marks all over his body - the result of torture. The remaining two were Patricia Giglione, aged 18 and a friend of Liliana's and Clotilde Yercovich, previously cited in this case history. She was aged 18 and a university friend of Liliana's. They had both been arrested 15 days before this and had been detained in the police station, where both had been tortured and threatened; Patricia

denied all this when she appeared before the Judge. Both girls were given the possibility of obtaining their freedom if they collaborated with the police. Muzzolon, Bermúdez, Gentile and Yarcovich had to sign another statement (allegedly under torture) in which they recognized as belonging to them certain explosives and subversive literature which had been found in the outskirts of the town. Liliana was implicated in this as well.

On 13 September 1975, just five days after Liliana had denounced her torture before the Federal Judge of Río Cuarto, part of the Vogler's family home was blown up. Liliana was threatened with death.

At the end of October 1975, the Córdoba newspaper La Voz del Interior, published an article put in by relatives of political prisoners, denouncing Liliana's torture. On 22 November (1975), the Voglers' home was again blown up. Liliana's father, Guillermo, was told that he would be killed if he did not leave the city within 72 hours. On 18 December, Guillermo Vogler was arrested and sent to Córdoba Penitentiary.

The Córdoba area of Argentina is controlled by the III Army Corps, who are notorious for their repressive measures. Immediately after the military coup of 24 March 1976, people in the prisons and concentration camps in this area were openly tortured, mutilated and killed. All the prisons in the Córdoba area were totally isolated from the outside world. The prisoners were not allowed to write, receive letters or visitors. They were allowed no reading material or radios. During the period April - August 1976, 29 political prisoners from Córdoba Penitentiary died: they either died as a result of torture or were removed from the prison and unofficially executed. Four women who were in prison along with Liliana died: the body of one of them, 23 year old Alicia Rosetti and the mother of a small child, showed severe knife wounds. She had spent 30 days in total isolation, without clothes (this was mid-winter) and insufficient food.

In September 1976, prisoners were removed from Córdoba Penitentiary and taken to Villa Devoto (women) and Sierra Chica (men) prisons. It was at this time that Liliana arrived at Villa Devoto.

Both Liliana and her father Guillermo were adopted by Amnesty International in July 1977. Guillermo Vogler was released in December 1977 and now lives in exile in the USA. Liliana was charged under Law 20.840 - the Law of National Security - and sentenced to 9 years' imprisonment in March 1978 for possession of explosives and subversive literature and affiliation to the ERP (People's Revolutionary Army - Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo) - a violent, left-wing organization. It is worth noting that of the group arrested on or around the same date as Liliana, she was the only one who denounced her torture and torturers to the judge. While the person most implicated was given a 6 year sentence, she received the severest sentence. Relatives state that she is completely innocent of the charges brought against her; her case is now under appeal before the Federal Court of Appeal in Córdoba. A state-defender has been appointed because no lawyer is willing to take on the case.